

Ritual and foreign language practices at school

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on adolescents at an inner-London secondary school who are learning German rather reluctantly in a foreign language class, and then using the language to play around elsewhere. I argue that the language teacher's pedagogic methods turned the German lessons into relatively intense institutional rituals, and that the lessons provided symbolic and socio-emotional material that students subsequently inverted in a set of micro-ritual improvisations. There are some endemic problems of evidence in the argument that instructed German was connected to improvised *Deutsch* by cause-and-effect processes associated with ritual, but the discussion ends by affirming ritual's value as an analytic frame that can be applied both to institutional language learning and to historical shifts in classroom experience. (Ritual, code-switching, interaction, foreign languages, language teaching, applied linguistics)*

INTRODUCTION

Even though instructed foreign language learning¹ has received surprisingly little attention in sociolinguistics, vast numbers of people engage in it every day. In an earlier article (Rampton 1999a), I showed how adolescents in a multi-ethnic secondary school in London turned the German they were taught to a range of unofficial uses of their own, playing vigorously with its sound properties and subversively restyling it in their mathematics and English lessons. Although such practices are seldom documented (though see Preston 1982, 1989:206), they are probably quite common, and many people can remember “playing” with foreign languages when they were at school. At a time when there is widespread public concern about low levels of achievement in school-based foreign-language learning in the UK and in other English-dominant countries (Boaks 1998, Branaman & Rhodes 1998, Schulz 1998), any evidence of the unsolicited reuse of an instructed language is potentially relevant to the educational debate. In my earlier article, however, there was no analysis of the language lessons that provided the linguistic material for the informal improvisations I described, and so it was very difficult to judge whether or not such performances might be the SYSTEMIC OUTCOME of particular kinds of classroom experience. The data on impromptu *Deutsch*

might be as novel in applied linguistics as in sociolinguistics, but standing alone, they didn't provide much scope to engage with any cause-and-effect accounts of learning and teaching, and so they were little more than a quirky footnote to debates about foreign-language classroom processes.

Here, I seek to repair that gap by offering an empirical account of: (a) the lessons in which these adolescents were taught German, set next to (b) some further analysis and interpretation of the *Deutsch* improvisations themselves, followed by (c) a discussion of the ways in which these two sets of practices could be linked. (I shall differentiate these two sets of practices by referring to 'German' in the lessons and to '*Deutsch*' in the improvisations.) The central concept used to theorize the connection between teaching and improvisation is RITUAL, and so it is necessary first to outline my understanding of this notion.

"Ritual" is obviously a very broad and encompassing concept. As well as being a term in everyday talk, it has a long history in a number of disciplines (cf. Grimes 1985), and it can be used to describe a huge range of activities and processes, from the international to the interpersonal. Within my analysis, ritual will be conceptualized broadly in the tradition of Durkheim 1912, 1972:219–238, Douglas 1966, Goffman 1967 and Turner 1969, 1978, 1982, 1987, and although certain aspects of it will need to be elaborated later on, initially it can be characterized as follows:

Ritual can sometimes take comic forms, but there are serious concerns lying at the heart of ritual, with a heightened orientation to issues of transgression and respect. Ritual can be performed in a huge variety of ways, in a wide range of arenas, but it is fundamentally oriented to moments and periods when, for one reason or another, there are actual or potential changes or problems in the flow of ordinary life. Ritual is a form of action that is typically (though not invariably) intended to help people get past such difficulties and on with normal life, albeit often in a new state; to do this, it draws on symbolic material that holds special significance above and beyond the practical requirements of the here-and-now (Goffman 1971:62–94, 1981:20–21). While it is being performed, there is "time-out from normal social roles, responsibilities, rules, orders, and even modes of thoughts" (Rothenbuhler 1998:15), and the mood is often what Turner calls "subjunctive" rather than "indicative," characterized by an orientation to feeling, willing, desiring, fantasizing, and playfulness rather than by an interest in applying "reason to human action and systematis[ing] the relationship between means and ends" (Turner 1987:123; cf. Sperber 1975). Rituals tend to generate an increased feeling of collectivity among at least some of the participants, and they also involve the participants in PERFORMANCE, "an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience" (Bauman 1989:262, cited in Rothenbuhler 1998:8–9).²

In this definition, the notion of ritual can be applied to a very wide range of activities, from coronations to apologies, and this scope and elasticity can make it a

difficult concept to employ. Overuse of the term can lead rapidly to diminishing returns, and in starting out on any piece of discourse, it can be no replacement for the kinds of apparatus provided in phonetics and phonology, functional grammar, micro-sociology and conversation analysis, the ethnography of communication, and so forth (see Duranti 1997). But although ritual is a far looser and more general concept than a fall-rise or an adjacency pair, one can still use it to say that some strips of action are more ritualized than others, and when this is done, particular modalities in the operation of power move into focus, as a number of anthropologists have emphasized (e.g. Bloch 1975, Lukes 1975, Parkin 1984, Myers & Brenneis 1984, Gal 1989). Within a political frame, it becomes appropriate to ask questions such as these: What kinds of change, tension or uncertainty are particular strips of action orienting to? How are they trying to deal with them? Who is making or calling for what kinds of investment? And what kinds of contestation are there around the identities, lines, and values that particular rituals seek to enshrine? In due course, we will have cause to refer to other aspects of ritual, but to begin with, it will be these micro-political issues that feature most prominently in the account of instructed German and impromptu *Deutsch*.

The data that I analyze come from a 28-month project entitled “Multilingualism and Heteroglossia In and Out of School.” Fieldwork lasted approximately one year and focused on a core group of 20 fourteen-year-olds in two multi-ethnic London schools – one suburban and one inner-city. Data collection involved interviews, participant observation, radio-microphone recordings, and participant retrospection on extracts from the audio recordings. The starting point for this analysis lay in the discovery that in the inner-city school, students – particularly boys – were using German in break time, in corridors, and in English, mathematics and humanities lessons on a very rough average of about once every two hours (see Table 1). None of these youngsters had family links with Germany, and although it can’t be discounted as a stock of knowledge that added to the resonance of these practices, there was no direct evidence that the representation of Germans in popular culture was an immediate influence (see Rampton 1999a:485–86 for further discussion). Instead, all of the linguistic, interactional, and interview evidence pointed to their thrice-weekly foreign-language lessons as the principal source,³ and it is to a description of these that we now turn.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GERMAN LESSONS

Gaining access to the German language classes attended by my informants proved difficult, and in the event, I was only able to record two 50-minute lessons and sit in on one double lesson.⁴ This is obviously a small sample, but the teachers were competent, committed, and experienced, and both were well practiced in broadly audiolingual methods and methods based on structural linguistics (Rivers 1964; Stern 1983; Lightbown & Spada 1993:73,119). They were well attuned to the

TABLE 1. *Summative data on Deutsch in one tutor group in an Inner London comprehensive school. The first 37 hours of radio-microphone recordings from four 14-year-olds (2 male, 2 female) covered a period of two months, and spread over this period, outside German lessons, there were about 20 episodes involving a spontaneous use of German. These episodes can be broken down into the following figures:*

Total number of speakers identified using <i>Deutsch</i> outside the GFL lesson:	8
Number of boys:	5
Number of girls:	1
Number of teachers:	2
Total turns-at-talk in German:	c. 70
Number of turns by pupils:	c. 67
Number of turns by teachers:	3
Number of turns by boys:	c. 63 (of varying lengths; out of 20.5 hrs of boys wearing radio-microphones)
Number of turns by girls:	4 (all of one word; out of 16.5 hrs of girls wearing radio-microphones)
Max. no. German turns in a sequence:	c. 14
Min. no. German turns in a sequence:	1
Max. length of turn:	c 28 syllables
Min. length of turn:	1 word
Max no. turns per user:	c 20 (Hanif)
Min. no. turns per user:	4 (Ninette); 1 (Mr. Newton)

requirements of national assessment schemes (Mitchell 2000:288–89), and there was also much in common with the large corpus of foreign language lessons analyzed by Mitchell & Martin 1997. Over all, there was little to suggest that as foreign-language lessons, these classes were particularly unusual.

In terms of organization, the lessons had a clear structure. Each was divided into fairly well demarcated sections, each required a good deal of collective synchronization from pupils, and the teacher did her best to maintain one central line of activity.

Both the recorded lessons fell into about 10 or 11 major segments. The first one, for example, consisted of (1) doing the register of attendance; (2) a listening comprehension, noting down the times of the day in eight short German dialogues performed by the teacher; (3) going through the answers, with a quick hands-up survey of individual results; (4) choral repetition and translation of seven German sentences describing early-morning routine activities, hand-drawn on flashcards introduced by the teacher (*ich wache auf* ‘I wake up’, *ich dusche mich*, ‘I have a shower’, etc); (5) aural revision, with one pupil standing at the board being asked to point at the picture described in each of the sentences spoken by the teacher; (6) teacher questions to the class about the flashcards (*Can anyone remember what we’ve just seen?*); (7) questions to the class about the

flashcards now hand-held by different pupils (*Can anybody tell me what J___ is doing?*); (8) copying the sentences from the blackboard into exercise books; (9) writing down the homework in homework diaries; (10) a brief preview of the next lesson to fill up the remaining lesson time; (11) packing up. Within most of these segments, there was a steady and relatively predictable progression though the subcomponents: all the names in the register, all eight answers in the dialogues, and all seven flashcards. Within brief exchanges, pupils were sometimes led word by word through the German sentences they were learning:

(1) Wednesday afternoon. During segment 6, Ms. Wilson (not her real name) is focusing on *ich ziehe mich an* 'I get dressed':

- 1 Ms. W: ANYBODY? (.)
- 2 anybody? (.)
- 3 quickly (.)
- 4 **ich** (.)
 ((*trans: I*))
- 5 John: I just ()
- 6 Ms. W: **zie::he::**
 ((*trans: dress*))
- 7 Anon: **ziehe** (*hafzeg*)
- 8 Anon: **ich habe mein / hess**
- 9 Anon: () **ziehe**
- 10 Ms. W: **ich ziehe mi::ch**
- 11 Anon: **mick**
- 12 Anon: **mick**
- 13 Anon: **mick**
- 14 Ms. W: **a:/:n**
- 15 Anons: **an**
- 16 Hanif: ((*quite loud:*)) that's the one
- 17 Ms. W: **ich ziehe mich an**

The teacher generally pursued all these sequences to the end, seldom abandoning any halfway through, but she tried to offset this predictability by frequently changing the channel and the configuration of participants and participant roles. In the lesson outlined above, for example, after the register, which involved pupils listening and replying individually, they were supposed to listen and write (segment 2); look, listen and repeat chorally (segment 4); observe one of their number listen to the teacher, look, and point (5); listen and volunteer replies (6); either hold a flashcard or reply to teacher questions as selected (7); read and copy (8). Over all, pupils were expected to stay alert to what was happening on the main floor of the German classroom: *everybody listen cos I'm gonna pick on you*.

The purity of this progression through the skills and content specified in the curriculum was preserved by a pedagogy that kept the students' own agendas and experience at arm's length. The teacher told pupils several times not to worry if they didn't provide an accurate or truthful answer to her questions about their morning routine: *you can give me any time, I don't really mind too much . . . we're just practicing this construction; or pretend you do for a minute . . . just give me a time*. The emphasis was on pupils' memory of recent lesson content rather than

on their analytic intelligence, which might lead the lesson off in unpredictable directions. Pupils were often asked to try to remember: *very quickly let's just see how much we can remember; let's see what you can remember; half EIGHT remember.* The sentence patterns were presented as matters of convention to be memorized rather than as the instantiation of more general grammatical principles that one might work from: *the **auf** goes to the end of the sentence, you put the time (.) in the middle (.) Germans do that; I wake (1.0) AT seven o'clock up ... that's just how Germans do it.*

The articulation of students' own concerns and perspectives wasn't prohibited, but it was generally allocated to controlled spaces specified by the teacher. There were phrasal slots for this in the teaching of German sentence patterns:

- (2) Ms. W ((speaking while writing on the board)):
ich (1.0) **putze** (1.0) **mir** (1.0) **die** (1.0) **Zähne** (1.0) **um** (1.0)
 and then whatever time you do that
 ((translation: I brush my teeth at)) (GL2:387)

When students raised complications, the teacher postponed a response either until the end of the sequence she was engaged in, or to a time when it wouldn't interfere with the lesson's development:

- (3) ((Maira has replied to the question 'wann isst du Frühstück' ('when do you eat breakfast') with 'I don't')):

Ms. W: **du isst nicht** ((trans: you don't eat))
 I'm gonna put that sentence up on the board in a minute
 pretend you do for a minute
 just give me a time

((Lara is complaining that Ms. W doesn't mark their books:))

Ms. W: Lara can you just leave it now
 we're gonna go on to something else
 you can talk to me at the end if you want (.)

Indeed, when Ms. Wilson judged that a pupil was misbehaving in a way that deserved punishment, she often just wrote his or her name on the blackboard without commenting on it. One of the teachers in Mitchell & Martin's report said, "If they're naughty and cause you to speak English, that's not right" (1997:18); in the case here, the teacher's use of the blackboard looked like a strategy for keeping the main spoken track relatively clear of potentially distracting arguments over discipline.

Borrowing Goffman's terms, one could say (i) that the emphasis in German lessons was on pupils operating more as "animators" than as "authors," physically articulating words rather than selecting them to compose sentences themselves; and (ii) that unless they identified closely with what they were being taught, the opportunities for them to speak as "principals," as people taking personal responsibility for their speech, were limited (cf. Goffman 1974, chap. 13). This seemed to be a matter of pedagogic policy, and the subjugation of centrifugal

individualities was emphasized explicitly when the other teacher I observed was reprimanding a class whose behavior she felt was deteriorating:

- (4) Boy: Miss, the reason I
 Ms. Phillips: no I don't want 'I', I want you to talk as a class ...
 ((Later:))
 Ms. Phillips: this 'I', needing to give information about yourself,
 I don't need that

All in all, then, German lessons seemed to be very carefully structured events, with the teacher leading students step by step through the content, continuously rearranging the participation structures, and doing her best to ensure that the central business of the lesson remained undisturbed by the idiosyncratic concerns of particular students. With this description in place, we can now consider the ways in which ritual might be relevant to its characterization.

RITUAL IN THE LANGUAGE LESSONS⁵

DuBois 1986 provides a useful survey of the kinds of speech used in ritual events, which bear striking similarities to the discourse in the German class (see also Bloch 1975). DuBois's list follows, together with corresponding features from the foreign-language lessons I observed:

(a) **OBSCURITY IN PROPOSITIONAL MEANING:** Students in the German lesson would ask *what does that mean* and say *I didn't understand that*. Propositional transparency evidently wasn't the primary concern when they were expected to respond to the third-person question *what is J___ doing according to her card* with, for example, an answer in the first person – *ich wache auf* 'I wake up'.

(b) **PARALLELISM**, for example with couplets formed according to simple but strict syntactic rules of repetition with substitution: This could be seen in the imitation drills, as well as in the question-and-answer sequences in which students were expected to add their own times to the sentences that they had copied from the teacher.

(c) **A MODE OF DELIVERY** that entails "a high degree of fluency, without hesitations, in a stylised intonation contour," accompanied by "prescribed postures, proxemics, behaviours, attitudes and trappings" (1986:317): Again, the teacher aimed for this in the language drills:

- (5) Some choral drilling from the first German lesson (Hanif is wearing the radio-microphone):
- | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Ms. W: | right |
| 2 | | if everybody can () now (.) |
| 3 | | ICH ESSE FRÜH STÜCK |
| | | ((trans: I eat breakfast)) |
| 4 | Single pupil: | ich esse früh stück |
| 5 | Ms. W: | ICH ESSE FRÜH STÜCK |
| 6 | | bitte alle zusammen |
| | | ((trans: all together please)) |

7	Several voices, but not Hanif:	
8	Ms. W:	((ragged chorus:)) ich esse Frühstück
9	Other voices: ((still ragged:))	ich je::sse Früh stück
10	Hanif((quite quietly):)	ich esse Frühstück
11	Ms. W:	ich je::sse Früh st ück
12	Several:	ich jesse Früh stück
13	Hanif:	ich esse Frühstück
14	Boy:((loud))	esse Frühstück
15	Ms. W:	(QUIET) BITTE ((trans: PLEASE!))
16		((shouting very loud:)) ALLE ZUSAMMEN ((trans: ALL TOGETHER))
17		ICH ESSE FRÜH STÜCK
18	Others:	/ ich esse Frühstück
19	Hanif: ((sounding less than whole-hearted:))	ich esse Frühstü:
20	Anon:	()
21	Guy:	it's breakfast time
22	Boy:	what /is it
23	Ms. W:	(was das) auf English ((trans: what () that in English))
24	Guy:	breakfast
25	Ms. W:	breakfast
26		I eat breakfast

(d) The use of “ARCHAIC, BORROWED, TABOOED OR FORMULAIC” ELEMENTS that mark the ritual “register” off from colloquial speech: A good deal of German was learnt and used as a chunk, and its separateness from ordinary talk was emphasized when, for example, Ms. Wilson criticized students for *babbling on in English* and reminded them *uh entschuldigen auf Deu.:tsch*: (‘oh sorry, in German’), *otherwise it’s very easy*.

(e) LOCAL BELIEF IN THE ARCHAISM AND ANCESTRAL ORIGINS OF RITUAL SPEECH, and a tendency for speakers to disclaim any credit or influence on what is said, paying tribute instead to a traditional source: German wasn’t construed as an archaic or ancestral language, but its origins among a distant people were stressed (*that’s just how Germans do it*), and the emphasis on memory discouraged speakers from exercising much personal influence on the use of the language.

(f) The MEDIATION OF SPEECH through additional people, so that there is more than a simple relation of speaker and hearer: The teacher was the main vehicle through whom German was mediated to the pupils, and on occasion, she performed multi-party German dialogues by herself. There were also audiotaped dialogues and several permutations through which pupils mediated German to one another (*according to S’s card, what is she doing?; excellent, ich stehe um fünf nach sieben auf* (‘I get up at five to seven’). *Moirra what time does erm Alan get up at.*)

There were, then, a large number of discursive features in the German lessons that match DuBois's list. There is also significant correspondence if we return to the more functional characterization of ritual offered at the beginning of this article.

The "heightened mode of communication" in the German lessons and the teacher's efforts to get students to suspend disbelief and think and act collectively have already been mentioned. Beyond that, Ms. Wilson showed a strong sense of the difficulties that students faced in the repeated reassurance that she offered the class (*don't worry about this at all until Friday; there's only number one number two number six to worry about; you shouldn't have too many problems as long as you use th[e vocabulary section]*). At the most general level, the German lessons can be seen as a protracted process of initiation into basic knowledge of the German language, an endstate specified in the National Curriculum (cf. Mertz 1996:240).

If we move one step beyond the definitions offered so far, we can also find discussions of ritual that provide a line into the kind of involvement that was expected of the students. According to Turner, structured collective activities like religious rituals, artistic performances, and games generally aim for a state of "flow." Flow involves the

holistic sensation [we get] when we act with total involvement . . . [There is] a centring of attention on a limited stimulus field. Consciousness [is] narrowed, intensified, beamed in on a limited focus of attention . . . [there are] coherent, non-contradictory demands for action, [with] . . . clear, unambiguous feedback to a person's actions . . . Loss of ego is another 'flow' attribute . . . the actor is immersed in the 'flow', [s/he] accepts the rules as binding which are also binding on the other actors . . . [and] no self is needed to 'bargain' about what should or should not be done. (1982:56,57)

If one looks back at Ms. Wilson's sustained concentration on flashcards depicting early-morning routine, at the insistent correction and remodeling, at the calls for **alle zusammen** and for the suppression of 'I', there are good grounds for suggesting that it was something like a state of 'flow' that the teacher was trying to produce in the German language class (cf. van Lier 1996:105–106).

How far did she actually succeed? Before answering that question, there are two more points that need to be made about the ritual aspect of the whole-class oral work in these lessons:

(a) First, it was very much an INSTITUTIONAL ritual (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977:108ff; Bourdieu 1991: 117–126; Bernstein 1971:56–57), passed on between professionals, agreed in staff meetings, and debated in ministries, universities, and colleges of education. There might well be some dispute among the experts about the value of choral drills, but locally, in the classroom, they were

expressions of authority, attempts to mobilize support for officially ratified goals and values, and calls for youngsters to participate in socially approved lines of development.

(b) That said, however, there is room for maneuver in even the most rigid of rituals, and in plural, stratified societies, people respond to rituals in different ways, some of them quite at odds with the original design (Lukes 1975).

Both these issues will prove relevant to a consideration of the students' responses.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Given the data's selective focus on only a subset of the members of the class, as well as the fact that the radio-microphone provided a close-up view of only one of them, it is impossible to give a comprehensive account of how students responded to this pedagogy, and what follows is far from a systematic study of "teacher effectiveness." Indeed, even within my very limited corpus, it was obvious that the class was much more responsive first thing Friday morning than after lunch on Wednesday – to the extent that Ms. Wilson declared at the end of the Friday lesson that *the board is clear, the board is clear*. Within each lesson, the pupils caught on the radio-microphone seemed to be more involved and attentive at some moments than at others, and so there are no claims here to a comprehensive sampling of students' behavior in German language classes; if anything, the portrait that follows is unduly biased toward misconduct.

For the present purposes, however, it is sufficient to say that there were quite a few students, my informants included, who weren't unequivocally reverential, rapt, or enthusiastic during the class. They tended to be disparaging about German lessons in interviews:

- (6) Ben: ... so erm you enjoy the German lessons
 Hanif: nwe:r
 Masud: no it's the teacher ((laughs))
 Hanif: yeh
 Masud: the teacher gets on (gets on your nerves)

On Wednesday, after putting *too many names on the board*, the teacher declared to the class: *okay, how come every time we do oral work, you get out of hand. The only time this class can actually (1.5) be manageable is when we do writing*. As we have seen, the German lessons were heavily teacher-directed, but within these tight constraints, pupils used a range of tactics – "manoeuvre[s] 'within the enemy's field of vision'" (de Certeau 1984:37) – to assert themselves as individuals unwilling to submit unquestioningly to the current regime, "'putting one over' on the established order on its home ground" (25).

Ms. Wilson wanted lessons with a highly structured central line, composed of regular sequences and clearly punctuated segments. In the event, students used several strategies that might be loosely described as a kind of interactional syncopation. Syncopation in music involves "the deliberate upsetting of rhythm by

shifting the accent to a beat that's normally unaccented" (*Hutchinson Dictionary of Classical Music* 1994:208); in the lessons, students used timing and emphasis to pull against the rhythms that Ms. Wilson was trying to establish and maintain. In (7) below, for example, in lines 14 and 15 Lara refers back to an issue from a lesson segment that had just been terminated, and in lines 8, 11, and 17, "Boy" and John dwell on remarks that Ms. Wilson had only intended as background framing:

- (7) The students have just answered and self-marked eight aural comprehension questions, and Ms. Wilson has surveyed the results. She now wants to introduce the flashcards. (Wednesday afternoon)
- 1 Ms. W: I want you to have a look at these now
 2 Kids: ((*low level chat for 5 seconds*))
 3 Ms. W: okay
 4 **bitte:** (.)
 ((*trans: please*))
 5 **schau mal**
 ((*trans: look at this*))
 6 John: are we to turn the radio on
 7 ?: ()
 8 Boy: what's **schau mal**
 9 ((*two taps*))
 10 Ms. W: look (.)
 11 Boy: oh **schau mal**
 12 Ms. W: okay
 13 ((*high-pitched:*)) **ich esse Frühstück**
 ((*trans: I eat breakfast*))
 14 Lara: miss what is the point of us /doing it our books
 15 if you never mark them
 16 Anon: () (1.0)
 17 John: **schau mo(t)**
 18 Anon: ((*laughs*))

They also "dragged their feet" at teacher questions:

- (8) Ms. W: according to K's card, what is she doing?
 can anybody tell me (.)
 i:n German hands up
 in German hands up
 come on
 there must be somebody in the (class)
 TAKE A GUESS
 take a guess
 Alan

Another tactic seemed to entail students taking advantage of the difficulties involved in knowing whether to attribute nonconformity to inability or disobedience, the former being acceptable where the latter isn't. When, for example, Ms. Wilson discovered that Frankie hadn't answered any of the eight questions about time (Wednesday lesson, segment 2), others leapt to his defence with *he didn't understand, he don't know the times*. They also sometimes took the episte-

mic high ground, insisting on reality and rational intelligence at a moment when they were being asked to suspend their disbelief:

(9) ((*Focusing on the flashcards showing early morning routine:*))

- Lara: Miss
 how come it's a girl over there
 and a boy is laying down
 Hanif: ((*fast:*)) because he changed sex
 Class: ((*loud laughter carrying on for about 10 seconds*))
 Hanif: sorry ((*followed by short half laugh to self*))

(10) ((*Ms. Wilson has been telling the class about her own morning routine, and has just gone from the flashcard on 'showering' to 'breakfast'*))

- Lara: do you have a shower
 and then you eat?
 Ms. W: yeah
 that's what I do
 Lara: AFTER you've had a shower
 you don't have no clothes on
 Ms. W: well no | I don't
 Several pupils: |((*laugh*|*ter*))
 Ms. W: | (I have a) dressing gown or something

In terms of their response to PARTICULAR activities, students seemed especially reluctant to participate in whole-class oral work. During the Wednesday afternoon lesson, there were about 30 occasions when Ms. Wilson modeled a sentence out loud, wanting the class to repeat it after her. Hanif, the boy wearing the radio-microphone, provided a full response to only about half of these calls; for the rest, he either repeated only a part, or distorted them, or kept silent.⁶ In contrast, he was much more assiduous about writing, and he sometimes got things down in his exercise book when he should have been speaking-and-listening. In fact, as already mentioned, the general preference for writing over whole-class oral work was something that Ms. Wilson herself commented on, and here again, "ritual" is a useful interpretive resource.

It is hard to be certain why these students preferred writing to oral work in the German class, but there are three points worth underlining. First, they all knew that speaking-and-listening counted for quite a lot in their exams. Second, they were perfectly capable of responding in choral synchrony when something funny happened in the class – there were a number of moments when they all laughed out loud together. Third, as we will see in the next section, OUTSIDE the German class there was plenty of evidence that these kids actually enjoyed speaking *Deutsch*. With these three points in view, their ragged and reluctant participation in whole class speaking-and-listening can't be attributed either to a feeling that it didn't matter, or to some sort of endemic inability to respond collectively, or to embarrassment about the very act of using a foreign language. Instead, we can suggest two possibilities:

- (a) Teacher-led choral drills and oral question-and-answer sequences were activities where the ritual dimension of German pedagogy was at its most intense. These were the activities that required pupils to make their most unambiguous public professions of collective affiliation to the German teacher, to learning German, and to doing it in the way they were told.
- (b) For students who weren't totally committed, this was just a bit too much.

In contrast, writing didn't require any comparable public exhibition: When it was time for students to copy sentences from the board into their exercise books, they worked at different speeds and were able to talk quietly, one-to-one, about whatever they wanted.

Summarizing the account so far, there was a lot of fairly intense collective ritual in the foreign-language pedagogy these youngsters received – much more, in fact, than in their mathematics, science, English, and humanities lessons, where they generally spent much more time working individually and in groups, where they were often encouraged to bring in their own views, and where there was normally much more room to dawdle, chat, or doze.⁷ At the same time, though, there were quite a few students who were less than enthusiastic in the German class, and this showed up particularly clearly in whole-class oral work, the lesson's most intensely ritual part.

IMPROMPTU PEER GROUP *DEUTSCH*

We now turn to the ways in which adolescents made use of German outside the language class. Rough figures on *Deutsch* outside the German class are presented in Table 1.

Linguistically, students were recycling simple politeness formulae (*danke* 'thanks', *Entschuldigung* 'pardon'), negative and affirmative particles (*nein, ja* 'no, yes'), some words and phrases used in classroom management (*gut* 'good', *Moment* 'one moment', *schnell* 'quickly', *komm nach vorne* 'come to the front'), and some of the constructions, words and phrases presented in elementary language courses, addressing topics like 'myself' (*Schwester* 'sister', *Bruder* 'brother', *mein Lieblingsfach* 'favorite subject'). Discursively, switches into *Deutsch* were sometimes quite closely tied to singing, and for some pupils, playing with the sounds of German were evidently a source of aesthetic pleasure (cf. Ramp-ton 1999a). Socially, as a standard language taught at school, the spontaneous use of German often went down quite well with teachers:

(11) Mr. Alcott is taking the register at the start of the school day. (24/4/97)

- 1 Mr. A: erm::
 2 A: _____
 3 A: yes sir
 4 Mr. A: (.) is Jane–
 5 (1.0)

- 6 John: **nicht hier**
 ((*trans: not here*))
 7 Mr. A: Marilyn (1.0)
 8 Jane **nicht hier** eh (.)

(12) The pupils have just entered the English classroom. (10/3/97)

- 1 Mr. N: erm (.)
 2 take a seat everybody
 3 take your coats off please (.)
 4 Hanif: **schnell schnell**
 ((*trans: quick quick*))
 5 Mr. N: **schnell schnell** exactly (1.0)
 6 vite vite
 ((*French, meaning 'quick quick'*))

On their own, these features suggest quite positive uptake from the German lessons, but closer examination reveals a more complicated picture. Here is an example of students engaging in some German choral call-and-response sequences in the corridors between humanities and mathematics lessons:

(13) At the end of a humanities lesson in the library, Hanif and Guy are at the door about to be dismissed. (13/3/97)

- 1 Guy: **(mach der)**
 2 ((*indistinct talk for 6 seconds*))
 3 **die Tür 'aufmachen**
 ((*trans: open the door*))
 4 Hanif: **die Tür 'aufmachen**
 5 Guy: John (.)
 6 Hanif: **-die 'Tu:er**
 ((*trans: the door*))
 7 | **zu:: 'ma:chen**
 | ((*trans: close*))
 8 Guy: | **zu:: 'ma:chen**
 ((*They leave the room ...*
A little later, as Simon (who is wearing the radio-microphone)
arrives outside the door of the Maths classroom:))
 18 Hanif: **aufmachen**
 ((*trans: open*))
 19 Guy: JOHN (.)
 talk (some German to)
 20 Hanif: **Entschuldigung (.)**
 ((*trans: sorry*))
 21 Anon: **die toor**
 ((*trans: the door*))
 22 Boys: ((*chorally:*)) | **zoo:: 'ma: che:n**
 ((*close*))
 23 Simon: ((*laughing:*)) **THIS IS AUFMACHEN**
 ((*open*))
 24 Masud?: **auf(machen)**
 25 Simon: ((*laughing:*)) **(oh schudigung)**
 26 Hanif: **Entschuldigung (.)**
 27 John: **Entschuldigung**
 28 Masud: eh
 29 **Mo|ment (.)**
 ((*trans: a moment – wait a moment*))

- 30 Hanif: **Mo|ment**
 31 Hanif: **Mo|me:nt**
 32 **Mo|me:n/t**
 33 Guy: **Mo|me:nt**
 34 **Mo|me:nt**
 ((the choral interplay continues until the Maths teacher comes out of the classroom))

In this sequence, the students aren't simply making up for the opportunities they wasted in the German lesson, and there are obvious differences in the prevailing social relations. Here, it is the pupils themselves who provide the models of German; it is their peers rather than the teacher who evaluate the product; the interaction is conducted in a spirit of levity, not seriousness; and it is hard not to see their slow delivery and exaggerated pitch contours as a parody of Ms. Wilson. Compare, for example, lines 4, 6, 8 and 22 in ex. (13) above with lines 3, 5 and 8 of (5).

Elsewhere, with other teachers, the use of German looks rather double-edged, as much a disruption as a display of eager curriculum language learning:

(14) Mr. Newton, the English teacher, is calling the class to order.

- 1 Mr. N: shoosh shoosh shoosh shoosh (1.5)
 / e::rm
 2 Boy: (rubber?) (.)
 3 Boy: what?
 4 Boy: (
 5 Boy: Good (1.0)
 6 Mr. N: /now (.)
 7 Hanif: ((*brief, loud & falsetto glissando:*))[u u: u::]
 8 Mr. N: erm DONT WASTE– time
 9 everybody
 10 js look this way
 11 (1.5)
 12 thank you (.)
 13 er we've | finished– ((5.0 till turn 15))
 14 Hanif: ((*quite loud:*)) | **danke**
 ((*trans: thank you*))
 15 Anon: is that gum or () (.)
 16 Hanif: gu/m
 17 Mr. N: can I please have–
 18 Anon: (
 19 Anon: (/)
 20 Mr. N: can I please have some complete attention everybody
 21 cos I want to talk for about 5 or 10 minutes

The extract begins with Mr. Newton calling for order and quiet, and by line 6, the pupils seem to be falling in line. There's enough quiet, it seems, to make Mr. Newton feel he can now move on to introduce the main business of the lesson, but just as he starts up with a pre-introductory, boundary marking *now* (line 6), Hanif overlaps him with a brief but very loud, high-pitched musical glissando (line 7). Mr. Newton immediately abandons his attempt to start the lesson introduction: In lines 8 and 10, he issues a couple of directives; he waits for a show of compliance

in line 11; and in line 12, he provides positive evaluation with *thank you*. After a very short pause, he restarts his introduction in line 13, but he doesn't get beyond the first one or two words before Hanif overlaps once more, this time with *danke*, an echo in translation of the evaluation that Mr. Newton used to close the regulative sequence a couple of moments before. Once again, Mr. Newton cuts short what he was going to say, and this time he waits for about SEVEN seconds before going back to yet another effort to get them to attend (line 17ff). All in all, with his intervention in line 7 and his subsequent involvement in side-play, Hanif's *danke* now looks much more subversive than before, timed to waylay the introduction of the lesson content, not to assist it.

The way that Hanif uses German just at a juncture where there's a problem of classroom management actually points to another general feature of adolescent *Deutsch*. Adolescent *Deutsch* was rather narrowly oriented to issues of classroom conduct and control, and in this regard, it was noticeably different from the ways in which, for example, these youngsters put on exaggerated "posh" and "Cockney" accents.⁸ Stylizations of "posh" and "Cockney" certainly did sometimes engage with issues of classroom order, but they also thematized sexuality, bodily demeanor, and issues of peer rapport. Similarly, *Deutsch* was more specialized than the stylized varieties I analyzed in earlier research on adolescent crossing into Creole and Panjabi (Rampton 1995), where, in addition to bodies and sex, there was a lot of jocular abuse between friends. In contrast, *Deutsch* was used mostly at moments when the heterogeneous activity of adolescents ran up against the institutional priorities of teachers. About half of the sequences occurred during moments when classroom order was being established (or reasserted) and youngsters were being called (back) into their official institutional role as pupils (e.g., exx. 11, 12, and 14); about three-fourths of the episodes registered the significance of teachers, either as principal addressees (11, 17), as the source of English words or expressions translated into German (14), as echoers of pupil German (11, 12, 16); and in the ten or so exchanges when it articulated apologies (16), disapproval (17), or commands seeking to enhance the flow of classroom affairs (12, 15), it encoded speech acts that were directed to repairing, noting, or preventing breaches of social propriety, at least on the surface.

(15) The same lesson, a little later on (7/3/97)

- 1 Mr. N: as I've said before
 2 I get a bit fed up with saying (.)
 3 shshsh
 4 John: ((addressed to Mr. N?:)) LOU/DER
 5 Mr. N: you're doing your SATs ((tests)) now
 6 Hanif: **VIEL LAUTER SPRECHEN**
 ((trans: speak much louder))
 7 **VIEL LAUTER SPRECHEN**
 8 John: ((smile-voice:)) **lauter spricken**
 9 whatever that is

- (16) Tutor period. The class is arranged in a circle for a discussion, and the idea is that only the person holding a “ceremonial” pen designated as such by Mr. Alcott is entitled to speak. Attempting to hand speaking rights over to Lara, Rafiq has thrown the pen across the room and hit her in the face. Mr. A has told Rafiq to leave the room and is now addressing Lara. (13/3/97)

1 Mr. A: I’m really sorry Lara
 2 John: Lara (.)
 3 Lara (.)
 4 / **entschuligen**
 ((*trans: sorry*))
 5 Mr. A: okay
 6 Guy: **entschludigung**
 7 Anon: **entschludigung**
 8 Guy: **entschlu/digung** ((*laughs*))
 9 Mr. A: **entschuligung ent/schuligung**
 10 Guy: Lara **entschludigung**

- (17) In preparation for groupwork activity in the same English lesson, Mr. Newton has asked pupils to change their seating arrangements. (7/3/97)

1 John: Hanif
 2 get up
 3 ()
 4 Hanif: **das ist nein gut**
 ((*trans: that is no good*))
 5 (6.0)
 6 SAA:–
 7 Sir (.)
 8 **ist magd keine neine**
 ((*?trans: is ?like? no no*))

In fact, if we consider the way that *Deutsch* was concentrated on social propriety and classroom orderliness, as well as surface features like propositional obscurity (ex. 15, lines 8–9; ex. 17, line 8), parallelism (exx. 13, 16), and the liberal use of politeness formulas (e.g., ex. 14), we can say that there was actually a distinctly ritual dimension to adolescent *Deutsch* itself. Some of its forms – the apologies, commands, and expressions of disapproval – correspond to Goffman’s “interpersonal verbal rituals”:

Face-to-face interaction . . . is the location of a special class of quite conventionalised utterances, lexicalisations whose controlling purpose is to give praise, blame, thanks, support, affection or show gratitude, disapproval, dislike, sympathy, or greet, say farewell and so forth. Part of the force of these speech acts comes from the feelings they directly index; little of the force derives from the semantic content of the words. We can refer here to interpersonal verbal rituals. These rituals often serve a bracketing function . . . marking a perceived change in the physical and social accessibility of two individuals to each other . . . as well as beginnings and endings – of a day’s activity, a social occasion, a speech, an encounter, an interchange. (Goffman 1981:21)

More generally, we can say that *Deutsch* was used in ritually sensitive moments, defining these as moments of heightened concern for the ways in which “each

individual ought to handle himself with respect to each of the others, so that he not discredit his own tacit claim to good character or the tacit claim of the others that they are persons of social worth whose various forms of territoriality are to be respected" (Goffman 1981:16). But if that is the case, how does 'ritual' here compare with what was said about ritual in the foreign language class?

If spontaneous adolescent *Deutsch* is compared with the ritual in the German class, there are some clear differences, particularly in terms of scale and elaborateness:

- (a) With whole-class speaking-and-listening, we were dealing with "rites of institution" (Bourdieu 1991; Bernstein 1975) – ritual actions that were authorized, quite carefully planned, supported by an elaborate methodology, and designed to maintain the participants' respect for prevailing institutional relations.
- (b) In contrast, adolescent *Deutsch* generally occurred as the spontaneous response to momentary problems perceived immediately-on-hand, and at first glance anyway, it looks more like INTERACTIONAL than institutional ritual, much more in the sense of Goffman than that of Durkheim, Bernstein, or Bourdieu.

When the other characteristics of improvised *Deutsch* are taken into consideration, however, it is obvious that there is much more entailed than just interpersonal politeness, or a little face work between friends. As Goffman notes, "Ritual concerns are patently dependent on cultural definition and can be expected to vary" (1981:17); and as already indicated, the interactional problems prompting *Deutsch* usually involved PUPIL-TEACHER POWER RELATIONS. In English and humanities lessons, *Deutsch* was generally confined to short bursts because kids had neither the space nor the authority to produce anything more elaborate, and in fact, as in (13), outside in the corridors they actually did develop extended collective sequences of *Deutsch*. In sum, BOTH sets of rituals were deeply embedded in competition for support and influence within the school, and the kinds of mobilization they aimed for were clearly shaped by the contrasting institutional positions that the lead performers occupied.

The teacher in the German class tried to create a unanimous community of initiands, willing, in a subjunctive mood of hope and belief, to embrace a process that would change them into successful speakers of German when they came to take their General/Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) school-leaving exams. In contrast, adolescent *Deutsch* in the mathematics, humanities, and English lessons tuned to a divided and sometimes conflictual grouping of teachers and pupils, and it played differently to each party. On the one hand, at least potentially, adults might be pleased or impressed at the eager reuse of a curriculum language; on the other, adolescent *cogniscenti* could enjoy the performer's tactical dexterity and the exclusivity of being party to an emergent ingroup tradition.

That, then, is a comparative description of (a) how the teacher taught German and how the students responded in the language class, and (b) the way that they used it outside and in other lessons. But exactly how can one explain the links between (a) and (b)? Exactly how far can one go in saying that the German lessons and impromptu *Deutsch* produced or influenced each other? In precisely what ways might one say the two were actively – even causally – connected?

EXPLAINING THE LINKS BETWEEN GERMAN LESSONS AND IMPROVISATIONS IN *DEUTSCH*

Impromptu *Deutsch* is most obviously construed as a subversive appropriation of instructed German. To elaborate this interpretation, it is initially helpful to draw on Bakhtin's account of the "authoritative word":

The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already ACKNOWLEDGED in the past. It is a PRIOR discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other discourses that are equal. It is given (its sounds) in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo, i.e., a name that must not be taken in vain ... [Authoritative discourse] demands our unconditional allegiance ... It is not a free appropriation and assimilation of the word itself that authoritative discourse seeks to elicit from us; rather it demands our unconditional allegiance ... It enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it. It is indissolubly fused with its authority – with political power, an institution, a person – and it stands and falls together with that authority. (Bakhtin 1981:342–43)

As the descriptions in earlier sections make clear, the German lessons were, in Bakhtin's terms, much more about "reciting by heart" than "retelling in one's own words" (1981:341), and they pushed students to become mere "animators," demanding levels of conformity and status renunciation – "unconditional allegiance" – unmatched anywhere else in the curriculum. Equally, as discussed in the comparison with DuBois's list of the features of ritual speech, German was also located in a "distanced zone," not in a sphere of "familiar contact." So on both grounds, we can classify instructed German as an "authoritative discourse." At the same time, though, there are difficulties in applying the later part of Bakhtin's account. As we saw in the description of student behavior during the language lessons, German wasn't totally affirmed; however, improvised *Deutsch* shows that it wasn't totally rejected either – it did not belong to the "congeries of

discourses that do not matter to us, that do not touch us” (342). German might, after all, have been simply forgotten and ignored outside the language classroom, but it evidently made enough of an impression on these youngsters for them to bother to reuse it.

This recycling of German does not, then, strictly conform to Bakhtin’s account of the “authoritative word,” but this does not mean that we should align German/*Deutsch* with the second kind of “alien” discourse he describes, the “internally persuasive”:

Internally persuasive discourse – as opposed to one that is externally authoritative – is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with ‘one’s own word’. In the everyday rounds of our consciousness, the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone-else’s. Its creativity and productivity consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organises masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition. (Bakhtin 1981:345)

In the way that impromptu *Deutsch* was concentrated around issues of order and propriety, it simply reproduced the broad association of language with authority and discipline that was epitomized in the German-lesson choral drills, and there was no evidence of its being extended beyond this rather narrow moral/linguistic nexus to any concern with, for example, German places, products, or people. As I have discussed elsewhere (Rampton 1999a), adolescents seemed to pay as much (or more) attention to the sound properties of *Deutsch* as to its denotational meaning, and over all, there was little to suggest that *Deutsch* was “awakening new and independent words.” Thus, while German might not elicit quite the absolute acceptance or rejection that Bakhtin attributes to authoritative discourse, it certainly didn’t permeate outward in the manner of the “internally persuasive.”

Within the idiom that Bakhtin offers us, the best way of characterizing the relationship between instructed German and impromptu *Deutsch* would be to retain the sacral overtones in the account of the “authoritative word” (‘hieratic’, ‘profaned’, and ‘taboo’), and to argue that the lessons turned German into a ritual language that was subsequently “taken in vain.” At the same time, rather than assuming the form of extravagant reversal, this profanation generally involved strategic masking, in a politics of resistance “which [made] use of disguise, deception, and indirection while maintaining an outward impression, in power-laden situations, of willing, even enthusiastic consent” (Scott 1990:17; but see Gal 1995 for caveats). As already noted, *Deutsch* was double-edged: The alignment with a curriculum language that *Deutsch* displayed could evade the censure of mathematics and English teachers, but the performer’s relatively covert commitment and skilled contribution to livening up the lessons could gain the support and even admiration of peers (Rampton 1999a:497–98).

In fact, this duality itself involved partial “secularization” of the connotational meanings of German. In the language lessons, German was given an other-

worldly significance, with the teacher tying it to a distant realm where, for example, people put *auf* at the end of a sentence. Outside, however, the resonances of *Deutsch* became much more local, with the German class itself becoming a central symbolic association. Not only did *Deutsch* localize these resonances, it also pluralized them, achieving its ambivalence through a combination of both indexicality and iconicity (Mertz 1985; Ochs 1988:211–22, 1990; also Clark 1996, chap. 6). Indexicality involves a contextual association between the sign and its object, while in iconicity there is some kind of perceptual similarity between them. When adolescents switched into German to disguise the dissident element of whatever they were doing from their TEACHERS, their performance would achieve its effect through German's general INDEXICAL association with the curriculum at school. The simple fact that German was learned as a school subject would be enough to provide math and English teachers with grounds for looking favorably on pupils' voluntary use of the language (Rampton 1999a:498). Any more specific allusion to German pedagogy would be lost on them, since it is unlikely that other teachers had any idea of Ms. Wilson's teaching style, and there was no reason for *Deutsch* performers to expect them to. But for an audience of peers who had first-hand experience of German instruction, improvised *Deutsch* could work ICONICALLY as a comic reproduction of, for example, the *Entschuldigung* in Ms. Wilson's rather imperative style of politeness.

We can suggest, then, that language lessons turned German into a ritual language, and that this ritual dimension was both acknowledged AND taken in vain in the subversive orientation to order and propriety displayed in impromptu *Deutsch*. There is, however, one very serious problem of evidence.

In developing the argument that language lessons turned German into a ritual language, particular emphasis was given to the whole-class speaking-and-listening activity. Therefore, to clinch the argument about the centrality of ritual in the connection between German and *Deutsch*, one might expect to find that knockabout *Deutsch* featured elements closely resembling the choral drills. In fact, this is the case in ex. (13), where the boys seemed to be parodying the highly ritualized oral/aural format that Ms. Wilson put them through. However, few of the other *Deutsch* improvisations were overtly modeled on the most ritualistic parts of the lessons. Instead, words and phrases like *danke*, *entschuldigung*, *Moment*, *schnell*, and *gut* are just as likely to have had their origins in the teacher's incidental classroom management talk as in central instructional sequences focusing on speaking-and-listening. Indeed, words and phrases like these are likely to occur in ANY foreign language pedagogy, not just in very formal ones, and the skeptic could easily claim that COMMUNICATIVE, non-audiolingual, non-ritualized language teaching would have been enough to enable my informants to produce their *Deutsch* improvisations. Beyond that, some of these phrases – *gut* and *schnell*, for example – could be directly picked up from and/or resonate with the representation of Germans in popular culture and the mass media. If surface resemblance was our only guide,

there would be grounds for saying that for much of the time, *Deutsch* might have nothing at all to do with the German language class.

The difficulty is in fact twofold. First, in any study of inversion, distortion, and oblique language use, there are often limits to how precise one can be in connecting stylized performance to the source on which it is modeled. In certain circumstances, this can be overcome, and in an analysis of parodic counterstatement, Richard Bauman judiciously focuses on couplets of IMMEDIATELY CONTIGUOUS straight and inversive utterances, arguing that this constitutes “a relatively circumscribed and accessible field of discursive practice in which controlled investigation of recontextualising transformations of the word may be carried out” (1996:302). Unfortunately, the German data afford no such controls, and they are not exceptional in this. Second, the difficulties are compounded if one is examining processes that involve “learning” over a longer period, as some researchers on second language learning make quite clear: “Longitudinal data [might be needed to] show evidence of sustained acquisition[, but t]he problem is that once the longitudinal evidence is in, it [can] be hard to link it incontrovertibly to the . . . work of yesteryear” (van Lier 2000:248; cf. Hutchins 1993:59–60). Even when they’re not trying to be funny, people transform the linguistic material they’re exposed to in strange and unpredictable ways, and this inevitably makes it hard to know exactly what the original material was that we think they might now be reproducing.

The way through this evidential problem is to move closer to accounts of how ritual works as a socio-emotional, intra- as well inter-psychological experience, with particular kinds of impact on subsequent conduct (e.g., Erickson 1969; Grimes 1985:143–46). It has often been observed that ritual assemblies generate a mood of collective intensity – a “collective effervescence” (Durkheim [1912] 1975:128, 136, 1972: 229, 235) – from which participants subsequently depart feeling morally replenished, at least for a while (Durkheim [1912] 1975:156; Handelman 1977:189). Turning to the German lessons, I have suggested that the teacher was trying to create a state of flow in the classroom, “an assembly animated by a common passion” (Durkheim [1912] 1975:128), but that many of her students were distinctly reluctant to comply. This reluctance, however, went deeper than simple indifference, since the improvisations showed that the students hadn’t just lost interest in the language (at least not during the period when the recordings were made). Instead, using a quasi-Freudian idiom, we could claim that, although the teacher judged them generally rather unsuccessful in her own terms, the rituals of the foreign language class provided an experience of “suppression” that was sufficiently intense to produce a counter-reaction, some kind of “return of the repressed” (see Billig 1999:97ff, 68 *et passim* for an interpretation of Freud that foregrounds the interactional rather than simply interior dimensions of these processes; also Turner 1978:576–77; Erikson 1969:718–19). In fact, an explanation like this, which attends to the socio-emotional quality of ritual experience, provides us with two paths past the impediment presented by the absence of a strong

empirical resemblance between between “output” and “input,” between stylized *Deutsch* and the model that inspired it.

First, rather than simply treating knockabout *Deutsch* as an indexical or iconic sign at the moment of utterance, we can go back to an older tradition of linguistic anthropology, where, following Sapir, we can suggest that the experience of the German lesson has turned German itself into something like a “condensation symbol.” Condensation symbolism plays a particularly important role in ritual (Rothenbuhler 1998:17–18), and Sapir defines it in contrast with “referential symbolism.” Whereas the latter constitutes the staple of linguistics and is subject to “formal elaboration in the conscious [as a conventional] system of reference,” condensation symbolism “strikes deeper and deeper roots in the unconscious and diffuses its emotional quality to types of behavior or situations apparently far removed from the original meaning of the symbol” (Sapir 1949:566). That being the case, attempts to trace the origins of a condensation symbol cannot rely on any close empirical correspondence to data on its source, and there is no reason to expect anything other than a rather indirect relationship between the choral drills led by Ms. Wilson and the *schnells* and *guts* produced by the kids.⁹

Second, an explanation oriented to socio-emotional experience actually allows us to RECONSTRUCT the absence of a strong empirical resemblance, reinterpreting it as another aspect of the inversion and profaning process. Oral work in the German lessons tried, I have suggested, to produce a state of flow among students, a state of concentration and engrossment where they would all act in concert. During states of flow and intense involvement, the organizational aspects of activity operate unobtrusively in the background, in what Goffman calls the “directional track.” According to Goffman, “in . . . sports [for example], the umpire inhabits the directional channel, his job being to bring editorial control, to punctuate the proceedings, but otherwise to be, in effect, invisible” (1974:417). In contrast, too much attention to whether the rules are being followed inhibits the experience of flow, and in Turner’s words, “there is a rhythmic, behavioural or cognitive break. Self-consciousness makes [the actor] stumble” (1982:56). If Goffman and Turner are right, it looks as though spontaneous peer group *Deutsch* might actually be antithetical to flow. Rather than rehearsing for immersion in German lesson content, the *Deutsch* improvisations tied the language to the regulative and disciplinary activities that ought to have stayed in the background if flow were to be achieved. Over all, one might say, adolescent *Deutsch* was comparable to a soccer practice devoted to dealings with the referee. Where the teacher aimed for immersion and flow in collective classroom speaking-and-listening, the pupils oriented to procedural management. Returning to Bakhtin, we can see this as yet further transgression of the “authoritative word,” which in its ideal form, purports to “permit . . . no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders” (Bakhtin 1981:343).

In fact, this view of *Deutsch* subverting “flow” can also speak to the larger fact of these youngsters’ underachievement over the longer term. Eighteen months af-

ter the data described above were collected, the principal exponents of peer-group *Deutsch* were reinterviewed. They had forgotten that they had ever used the language spontaneously; they continued to be unenthusiastic about foreign language lessons; and a little after that, they emerged with very poor GCSE school-leaving exam results in German. So far in this interpretation of the connections between German and *Deutsch*, the lessons have been discussed as a source model for the improvisations, but it is important to recognize that the influence could also go the other way. Impromptu *Deutsch* itself promoted a particular view of German language pedagogy, highlighting some aspects to the exclusion of others. Potentially at least, this could wash back on the expectations and the receptiveness that pupils took back into the German classroom, encouraging them, in metaphorical terms, to observe the frame and not the picture and creating a pedagogically stressful dissonance between the teacher's emphasis and the pupils' attention.

At this point, it is worth summarizing the argument as a whole. In the preceding analysis, I have described German being used both in institutional rituals (in the manner of Durkheim, Bourdieu, Bernstein, and DuBois), and in interaction rituals (à la Goffman). Authority relations were at issue in both, and there was an inverted relationship between these informants' relatively negative experience of the German lesson and their enjoyment of the unofficial improvisations. In fact, I have argued that methods of instruction endowed German with a ritual significance that impromptu *Deutsch* both acknowledged and profaned, repositioning the language so that its association with the German class and the German-language teacher took precedence over its canonical connections with much remoter native-speaking Germans. There was, however, one significant obstacle to this line of interpretation: There was a lack of a close linguistic resemblance between the forms of language used in two sets of speech data, and the improvisations looked as though they owed more to the discourse of routine classroom management than to the rituals of whole-class speaking-and-listening. I attempted to overcome this difficulty by taking the notion of ritual a little further, turning in particular to the socio-emotional experience that ritual involves. In this idiom, I suggested that although the pupils didn't enjoy the oral activity in the German class, it had an insistent intensity that got through to them, reemerging subsequently in spontaneous interventions subversively tuned to moments of potential conflict between pupils and teacher. The experience of the foreign-language class meant that German now operated like a "condensation symbol," and so we should not expect to find a close similarity between the two data sets. Indeed, rather than seeing the mismatch between choral drilling in German and classroom management talk in *Deutsch* as an obstacle to our interpretation, we were able to reconstrue this difference as yet another dimension of the subversion process. Where the teacher aimed for immersion and "flow" in collective classroom speaking-and-listening, the pupils oriented to procedural management, and this refocusing may have contributed to their longer-term lack of achievement in German.

There are, admittedly, a number of ways in which my argument might benefit from further theorization and evidence.¹⁰ Even so, a ritual perspective has been able to account quite coherently for the data. In conclusion, I would like to comment briefly on the way that my interpretation of ritual fits into language study more generally, and also on the reasons why it is worth pursuing this line of interpretation.

CONCLUSION

Although the notion of “ritual” has actually had a substantial impact on pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and second-language research, it has generally been construed in rather specialized ways, often losing touch with the intimate mixture of politics, symbolism, and emotion that ritual frequently involves.¹¹ Within linguistic anthropology, in contrast, there is obviously a very long and rich tradition in the analysis of ritual speech and ritual events, but the concept of ritual doesn’t itself always carry a major theoretical burden. Ritual frequently features as a consensual descriptor in initial characterization of the object of study, but often the analysis then moves quickly to the composition of the code, event, or practice, its position in the local communicative economy, its role in the management and/or contestation of prevailing social relations, its historical development, and so forth (e.g., Labov 1972, Ferguson 1976, McDowell 1983, Kuipers 1984, 1990, Briggs 1993, Szuchewycz 1994, Silverstein & Urban 1996, Foley 1997, chap. 18).¹² This situation obviously changes when attention turns practices that look ritual but haven’t yet been consensually designated as such. In such cases, the notion of ritual itself becomes a central focus of theorization (see, e.g., Katriel 1985, 1987, Ji et al. 1990, Rampton 1995, 1999b), and whether or not ritual is foregrounded as a construct, analysis is often informed by a sense of the psychic and emotional intensity experienced by ritual participants. It is not so usual, however, for central analytic claims in linguistic anthropology either to rely on or to seek to develop explicit theories of ritual as psychosocial process. In contrast, in this paper, in addition to focusing on authority relations, I have invoked the socio-emotional aspects of ritual as an explanatory mechanism – as a central theoretical warrant for the connectedness of instructed German and improvised *Deutsch* – and so it is worth restating my reasons for doing so.

As I noted at the outset, foreign-language learning and teaching is very much an applied linguistic issue, and in Britain as in other English-dominant countries, it is the site of considerable educational failure, with motivation among boys being identified as particularly poor (Boaks 1998:38). The data in this paper appear to synchronize closely with this wider educational problem, not only in the fact that boys engaged in subversive *Deutsch* to a much greater extent than girls (see Table 1), but also in the longer-term outcome of foreign-language underachievement. If there is to be any chance of intervening constructively in this

situation, it is necessary to look for cause-and-effect explanations. Indeed, this is normally the main quest in research on second- and foreign-language learning (SFLL), which takes the gap between two different kinds of data as its central problem space and then seeks to build theoretical models that show exactly how it is that one form – the learning input – gets transformed into another, rather different form, the learner’s (interlanguage) output. Admittedly, from an ethnographic perspective, SFLL research has often moved from description to theory rather too quickly, failing to do justice to the complexity of the empirical data it seeks to address (Rampton 1995:290–94, 1997), and this reservation reflects a more general anthropological wariness of high-inference, a priori, and potentially ethnocentric theory (Geertz 1973:20, 25; Bauman & Briggs 1990:61; Hutchins 1993:62). Even so, in at least some versions, anthropology recognizes that “problems lead where they will and that relevance commonly leads across disciplinary boundaries” (Hymes 1969:44), and this certainly becomes an issue when learning and education figure as substantive themes (Ochs 1988:212).

My argument, then, is that if we want to understand the impact of different kinds of foreign-language pedagogy, we ought to pay careful attention to the dynamics of ritual and to the authority relations and socio-emotional experience that ritual is variously associated with. This is not the occasion to engage in a detailed account the practical ramifications of this approach,¹³ but in ending, it is worth specifying three reasons why the ritual perspective outlined in this paper is likely to be relevant well beyond the confines of the data that I have analyzed.

First, and most closely related to the case on hand, it wasn’t just an accident or a matter of the teachers’ idiosyncratic preference that the lessons above displayed the characteristics of ritual speech. I began by defining ritual as an activity that is fundamentally oriented to moments and periods where there are changes or problems in the flow of ordinary life, and as a form of action that is typically intended to help people get over their difficulty and on with normal life, albeit in a new state. Foreign-language lessons in which students are supposed to hear and use nothing but the target language constitute a major disruption to their routine linguistic practice, and as such, they are an obvious occasion where ritual action can be appropriate. Indeed, in terms of the specifics of linguistic practice, there are likely to be a great many foreign-language classes where the ways of speaking closely resemble the features of ritual speech listed by DuBois. Of course, if the teachers in my own study had had a German exam syllabus that paid no attention to speaking-and-listening, or if they’d had plenty of money to spend on computers, or if their classes had been filled with pupils they could trust to stay on task when they were put in pairs and small groups, they could have avoided the kind of collective oral work to which the students seemed most resistant. But they didn’t, so they couldn’t. Local institutional exigencies compelled these teachers to push their students through a set of activities that gave their lessons the character of formal ritual, and they were certainly not alone in having to work in such conditions.

Second, there are many other learning contexts where comparably ritual activity may arise, at least during the early stages of institutional instruction. In learning to read, as in learning a foreign or second language, there is often an emotionally tensed initial engagement with the outer surface of language and text prior to comprehension of their grammatical and referential meanings (see Collins 1996:220–24; Mertz 1996:246; van Lier 2000:255–56, 258; Cook 2000:14–15; Rampton 1999a:491–97; Bakhtin 1981:289; Sperber 1975), and intuitively, similar processes seem just as likely to occur in classroom encounters with math and science.

Third, and most generally, as a “sensitizing” rather than “definitive” construct, “suggest[ing] directions along which to look” rather than “provid[ing] prescriptions of what to see” (Blumer 1969:148), ritual remains an essential analytic resource in any attempt to understand more general processes of educational change. In the 30 years following the 1960s, there was a major shift in British education away from the kind of highly ritualized pedagogy I have described in this article. As Bernstein explains, this period saw the development of more “masked” forms of social control, with the articulation of authority passing to more interpersonal, child-centered and “therapeutic” styles of communication (1971, 1975, 1996, chap. 3).¹⁴ Indeed in the school I studied, the collective synchronization demanded in the foreign-language lessons was very unusual. But ritual isn’t rendered a redundant or anachronistic concept by shifts of this kind. Among other things, Bernstein briefly notes, “We might also expect a switch from the dominance of adult-imposed and regulated rituals to dominance of rituals generated and regulated by youth” (1975:60). In the transformation of German into *Deutsch*, there is a glimpse of the kind of data that we can use to interrogate and nuance such a claim.

More generally, my analysis has tried to point up the fundamental compatibility of institutional and interactional perspectives on ritual. With this flexibility and range of application at both macro and micro levels, ritual provides us with a broadly consistent vocabulary capable of recognizing continuities, and not just differences, in the fluctuating moral emphases given either to collective or to inter-individual relations at school.¹⁵ Goffman might provide the best tools for analyzing certain types of face-to-face interaction between pupils and teachers, and there may be times and places when interpersonal ties predominate. The notion of ritual, however, allows us to stay in close touch with political and institutional analyses like Bernstein’s or Bourdieu’s, and we can also use it to scrutinize the ways in which, in particular locales, collective and interpersonal activity might be related. Indeed, rather than just being a matter of useful analytical compatibility, my data on the distribution of German and *Deutsch* across different activities and occasions affirm that in certain situations, there can be an intimate, real-world connectedness between institutional and interpersonal ritual. Thus, if we want to understand how pupils and teachers experience and negotiate changing forms in the moral order around them, ritual is a generic process that we simply can’t afford to ignore.

Much has been said recently of IDEOLOGY and language, and both in education and elsewhere, ideology has often been construed as a process that NATURALIZES social relations, reproducing and legitimizing stratification and inequality in everyday common sense, recruiting people to particular understandings of the world without their realizing it (Fairclough 1989, Woolard 1992, Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). Applied to schooling, this kind of critique can show how students are persuaded that they are bright or stupid, that their futures lie in one direction rather than another, and it invites analysis of textbooks, teacher-pupil interaction, and public and semi-public debates about education and learning (e.g., Fairclough 1992). But it is also vital to look at potentially formative moments of uncertainty, intensification, and conflict, when groups and individuals seek recognition for their interests through actions that are special or spectacular rather than routine (cf. Shils 1969). This is an angle that ritual allows us to address, and while investigating German/*Deutsch*, we have seen a range of animated and conflicting mobilizations for and against, in and around, official definitions of the social and linguistic identities that students should aim at. Ritual isn't only useful as a source of insight into the early stages of learning foreign languages and other unfamiliar communicative forms. It continues to be an indispensable resource for analysis of the shifting orders of school.

APPENDIX

Transcription conventions

[]	IPA transcription, reviewed to 1979
	stressed syllable with very high pitch
	stressed syllable with high pitch
-	stressed syllable, mid-level pitch
	stressed syllable with low pitch
\	high fall
\	low fall
/	low rise
(.)	pause of less than a second
(1.5)	approximate length of pause in seconds
[overlapping turns
/	place in the current turn where the next speaker begins to overlap
CAPITALS	loud
>text<	more rapid speech
()	speech inaudible
(text)	speech hard to discern, analyst's guess
((text:))	"stage directions"
bold	instances of German

NOTES

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¹ For example, the learning of German, French or Dutch by people with no family ties to the language, living in countries where there is no very significant local presence of "native" speakers.

² Admittedly, this is a somewhat "secular" definition, using the term 'serious' where 'sacred' might be expected (cf. Rothenbuhler 1998:23–25), but a version of this was sufficient for the broadly comparable research described in Rampton 1995, and at least initially, it accords reasonably well with the data on hand.

³ The following illustrates one of my attempts to probe at the origins of *Deutsch* in an interview (all the names except mine have been changed, both here and elsewhere):

(a) Interview with Guy, Satash and Simon. (PB7. 16/3/97)

- 1 Ben: German gets used a bit
 2 Satash: mmm
 3 Simon: mm hmm
 4 Ben: um why?/why do you think?
 5 Guy: cos (.) it sounds funny
 6 Ben: it sounds funny yeah I mean why German rather than Spanish
 7 Satash: cos we're not doing Spanish
 8 Guy: mm
 9 Simon: yeh
 10 Ben: so if you're doing Spanish
 11 Satash: yeah we'd probably speak Spanish
 12 Ben: right right (.)
 13 is German—it's not to do with kind of German-
 14 Germany being on the news more or
 15 Guy: no
 16 Satash: no
 17 Ben: no no no yeah
 18 but why— why German rather than for example Arabic
 19 Satash: cos none of us /are learning Arabic
 20 Guy: we don't know (.)
 21 Ben: uh
 22 Guy: cos none of us know Arabic
 23 Simon: we wouldn't know what it meant
 24 Satash: yeah
 25 Guy: (it's true)
 26 even with German we make ((it)) up anyway
 27 but we only make up cos what the teacher looks like
 28 when she does her faces (.)
 29 and (so) / when the teachers do it
 30 Satash: **Entschuldigung**
 ((trans: pardon))
 31 Guy: they— they do like ((gesture))
 32 Ben: what she puts—
 33 Guy: she (goes) /like that
 34 Ben: oh there's a gesture which goes with that
 35 is there
 36 Guy: yeh
 37 Satash: m/m
 38 Simon: yeh

- 39 Ben: which is– which is:
 40 Guy: **Ent/schuldigung**
 41 Satesh: that
 42 **Entschuldigung** (.
 43 Ben: which is exactly what Miss:: /() does
 44 Guy: Wilson does
 45 Ben: Miss Miss Wilson does
 46 yeh yeh
 47 Guy: yes Miss Wilson

Unfortunately, I can't recall exactly what the gesture in line 31 was; as the data in this paper were only audio-recorded (often outside my field of vision), there is no account in what follows of any gestural accompaniment to instructed German and improvised *Deutsch*.

⁴ The foreign-language teachers in this school were far more reluctant to allow me in to their lessons than any other subject teachers, and in this there is a certain consistency with the ensuing analysis of the German class as highly ritualized event – in anthropology, researchers are quite often excluded from ritual spaces and activities (McDowell 1983:36; Urban 1996:39).

⁵ Although it would undoubtedly contribute much to this discussion of the ritual dimension of the German lessons, analysis of the historical origins of “audiolingual” language teaching methods lies well beyond the scope of this article (see Howatt 1984; van Els et al. 1984, chap. 8).

⁶ It seems unlikely that the radio-microphone was significant inhibiting factor here: He had already had a lot of time to get used to it (3 hours that day; 6¾ hours in total so far), and more generally, there was little sign that the radio-mic encouraged him to be unusually quiet.

⁷ For classroom discourse analyses that capture something of the dynamic in these lessons, see, e.g., Gutierrez, Rymes & Larson 1995, Candela 1999, Kamberellis 2000.

⁸ Analysis of the stylizations of “posh” and “Cockney” is in progress (see Rampton 2001 for some preliminary findings).

⁹ A tight correspondence between types of data obviously isn't a prerequisite for theory and analysis in linguistic anthropology, and one of Gumperz's major contributions was to foreground theories of inference that muddled the relations between index and interpretation, breaking the hold of a rather positivist correlationalism that dominated sociolinguistics at the time (Gumperz 1982:30–37). Even so, in interactional sociolinguistics the emphasis tends to fall on inferences, implicatures, and contextualization cues that (a) have become CONVENTIONALIZED within particular networks, that (b) generally FACILITATE everyday communication within these networks, giving rise to interpretive difficulties only when people from different networks come into contact, and that (c) can be predicted and tested through quasi-experimental elicitation procedures if the analyst has enough local knowledge. In contrast, the notion of condensation symbolism points to forms and practices that are both insistent and INTRINSICALLY hard to make sense of, even within the social groups where they emerge and circulate. Indeed, one might argue that it was the absence of any adequate theorization of the mental processes associated with NONCONVENTIONAL symbolism that subsequently led to such uncertainty around Blom and Gumperz's notion metaphorical code-switching (Blom & Gumperz 1972; cf. Rampton 1998:302–3, 1995a:83–84). More generally, the further one looks for explanation in “depth psychology,” interior processing, and what Hutchins calls “the rich communication possible within a mind” (1993:61), the harder it is to find a close correspondence between a symbol and its source (cf. Billig 1999:28, 73, 203; Sperber 1975).

¹⁰ In my account of the transformation of German into *Deutsch*, I have invoked certain cause-and-effect processes associated with ritual, with one kind of socio-emotional experience generating rather different ones elsewhere, and I have combined notions of flow with some mildly Freudian themes (“condensation” and the “return of the repressed”), somewhat in the manner that Victor Turner cautiously suggests (1978:582). But there was no real attempt to address the highly complex relationship between interior psychological processes and communicative interactional ones (see Billig 1999; Sperber 1975, 1985; Hutchins 1993:60–62), even though it is actually possible (a) that the language class impacted more strongly on some youngsters than others; (b) that some individuals performed and enjoyed *Deutsch* mainly because their friends did, heedless of its echoes of the German lessons; with the result that (c) *Deutsch* might have worked as a “return of the repressed” to a greater extent for some than for others. At an empirical level, the overall argument would also benefit from various kinds of evidence that are currently rather hard to access. The explanatory line sketched out above

took shape long after fieldwork had been completed, and so there was no opportunity to explore it in interviews with participants; ultimately, its empirical consolidation might well depend on the availability of evidence that kids who are taught by “traditional” methods mess around with instructed foreign languages more than ones who receive more “communicative” teaching.

¹¹ Within pragmatics and interaction analysis, the use of “ritual” as an analytic concept is generally narrower than it has been in the analysis above. Admittedly, Durkheim’s discussion of positive and negative rites provides an explicit theoretical foundation both for Goffman’s analyses of face work and for Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness (Durkheim 1972:233; Goffman 1967:5–45, 47; Brown & Levinson 1987:43–44), but in both, the meaning of ritual is rapidly specialized. Elsewhere in social sciences, considerable attention is given to ritual’s symbolic significance and its relation to the historical and political experience and preoccupations of particular social groups (e.g., Douglas 1966, Turner 1969, Bernstein 1975). But even though it is acknowledged in principle (Goffman 1981:17), the symbolization of collective experience and (sub)cultural history plays little part in Goffman’s analysis of face (see Abrahams 1984:81–82), while in politeness theory, priority is instead given to individual speaker goals and means-and-ends reasoning (Brown & Levinson 1987:64 *et passim*; Strecker 1988). Thus, even though theories of face make an essential contribution to the identification of interactional *Deutsch* as a micro-ritual practice, they don’t in themselves speak directly to its intimate involvement in institutional conflict (see Rampton 2001:282–83).

In fact, in both pragmatics and sociolinguistics more generally, the term “ritual” is usually avoided. There is a range of concepts that undoubtedly have “family ties” to it, but they tend to be rebranded to mark their identity within specific paradigms, and streamlined to make them more tractable as analytic resources. “Face work,” “politeness,” and “phatic communion” (Laver 1975, Coupland et al. 1992) feature with regularity and abundance in the indices of pragmatics and sociolinguistics textbooks, but “ritual” is much harder to find (see, e.g., Clark 1996, Coulmas 1997, Downes 1984, Duranti 1997, Fasold 1990, Holmes 1992, Hudson 1996, Levinson 1983, Mey 1993, Schiffrin 1994, Wardhaugh 1998). “Preference organization” is another commonly used concept with family links to “face” and “ritual” (Heritage 1984:268; Brown & Levinson 1987:38), but there is no scope in conversation analysis for consideration of the processes involved in something like “condensation symbolism,” first because the developmental sequences that CA attends to a very short, spanning turns rather than ‘types of behavior or situations’ (Sapir 1949:566), and second because there is no place in its working assumptions for the idea that “ ‘human consciousness’ has a ‘deep interior’ ” (Silverman 1998:189).

Within research on second- and foreign-language learning, “ritual” has generally tended to feature as a term of deprecation, most often equated with old-fashioned (“traditional”) formal modes of instruction counterposed to the more interactive, “communicative” pedagogies advocated over the past 30 years or so. Edwards & Mercer 1987, for example, call learner activities “ritual” when they seem to be imitative, automatic, inflexible, practical, unreflexive, and designed to please the teacher; they contrast these unfavorably with “principled” learning, which is described as creative, considered, flexible, theoretical, meta-cognitive, and done for one’s own purposes. Within research on foreign- and second-language acquisition processes themselves, there has been considerable interest in learners’ use of formulaic patterns, but in line with a more general tendency to see language form as separable from meaning (e.g., Widdowson 1978:3, Ellis 1994:13; Skehan 1998:268), the social-symbolic aspects of formulaic language have been widely neglected; instead, research generally speaks of “repetition,” “routines,” “chunks,” or “prefabricated patterns” (e.g., Weinert 1995, DiCamilla & Anton 1997). More recently, a number of studies have started to question this orthodoxy, paying much more attention to ludic, social-symbolic, affective, and depth-psychological processes in second-language acquisition (see Cook 2000, van Lier 2000, Kramsch 2000, Ehrman & Dörnyei 1998). For the time being, however, the dominant view of second-language pedagogy is that students learn better when drills are replaced by communicative tasks because the latter are more interesting and “meaningful.” In contrast, a perspective like the one in this article suggests that repetitive, form-focused activities can be replete with symbolic meaning; that in certain socio-historical contexts, students are likely to enjoy and benefit from this (Rampton 1999b:332; Heller 1995); but if they don’t, this isn’t just because they find such activities dull. Instead, they are likely to be experienced as aesthetically distasteful and actively alienating, evoking social horizons, heritages, affiliations, and futures in which students feel they have no stake (see Rampton 1999b:331–35).

¹² Ritual’s position within linguistic anthropology’s taken-for-granted (Blumer 1969:144) can be seen in, for example, the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*’s “Lexicon for the Millennium” (9/1–2, 1999), where there are frequent references to ritual but no section specifically dedicated to it.

¹³ For example, research on classroom foreign-language learning often comments on the relative success with which students acquire foreign-language patterns that they hear teachers use for classroom management, comparing this favorably with the extent to which they pick up the language that has actually been planned as instructional content. There were occasions in my data when Ms. Wilson turned her own procedural discourse into teaching points (*finished? okay, in Ordnung . . . in Ordnung means 'fine'*). In fact, this is officially encouraged in the National Curriculum in England, which requires students to “use everyday classroom events as a context for spontaneous speech” (DFE 1995:2). But how far one should really welcome this is obviously an open question, especially if it’s a symptom of alienation from the experience of flow and involvement that the pedagogy seeks to generate. Beyond that, it is important to be cautious about claims that students pick up these bits of procedural language because they’re “authentic,” in contrast to the lesson content, which is “artificial.” Adolescents (and indeed, most humans) enjoy artifice, and in the data that we’ve seen, informants reproduced procedural and regulative *Deutsch* with laughter, in parody and/or in artful deception (see also Cook 2000). Rather than picking it up because of its epistemic status as “ordinary,” “untransformed,” and/or “natural” (which kids actually often find dull), it’s much more likely that students acquire bits of classroom management language because of its key role in micro-political struggles around freedom and control.

At another level, a ritual perspective offers a richer picture of the experience of TEACHING than the relatively technicist view that one often finds in discourses of second- and foreign-language teaching. If the methodological/operational aspects of teaching are emphasized, a teacher like Ms. Wilson is likely to be deprecated as the exponent of outmoded and inadequate techniques; in contrast, if she is construed as a troubled ritual specialist, proper recognition is given to the depth of investment that teachers often make in lessons. It would be foolish to suggest that the two language teachers I observed thought about their classes religiously – these were, after all, German lessons, and they’d doubtless use educational terms to think about them. Even so, from observation of the concentration and energy that they put into their own oral performance and the frustration they expressed when this fell flat, I would infer that they cared a great deal about their teaching, and that “teacher-centered” though their pedagogy looked, it really bothered them that students weren’t making the progress they wanted.

¹⁴ “In . . . schools [where] there is . . . a weakening of ritual and its supporting insignia . . . social control will come to rest upon inter-personal means. It will tend to become psychologised and to work through the verbal manipulation of motives and dispositions in an inter-personal context. We shall call this form of social control, this form of transmission of the expressive order, *therapeutic*” (Bernstein 1975:62).

¹⁵ Education policy in the UK is currently retreating from the “progressive” teaching methods of the post-1960s, with, for example, whole-class pedagogies now being backed by central government legislation (see Harris, Leung & Rampton 2001:39–41 on the “National Literacy Hour,” and Bernstein 1996, chap. 3, for a panoramic view).

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